



Toxic workplace, workstress, and employee performance: Predictive model

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ABSTRACT

A poor work environment and excessive work stress can significantly hinder employee performance and productivity. This study aims to examine and predict employee performance based on the influence of a toxic workplace and work-related stress at the Central Java DIY Contact Center. The research utilized a convenience sampling method to select 150 participants as respondents. To analyze the data, multiple linear regression was applied. The analysis revealed that both a toxic work environment and work stress had a negative and statistically significant impact on employee performance. Findings from this study indicate that the presence of toxic workplace behaviors and high levels of stress can deteriorate employee motivation, reduce focus, and ultimately lower overall productivity. Conversely, a supportive and comfortable work environment, free from unnecessary psychological pressure, tends to foster greater enthusiasm, efficiency, and higher performance outcomes among employees. This research is expected to contribute positively to the management practices at the Central Java DIY Contact Center by providing empirical evidence of how workplace conditions affect performance. The results may serve as a reference for the company in formulating strategies to create a healthier work culture, reduce stress factors, and enhance employee well-being. Through these improvements, the organization can increase productivity, retain valuable talent, and maintain a sustainable and competitive workforce.

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KEY WORDS:

toxic workplace; work stress; employee; performance; predictive model; workplace environment



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Introduction

The work environment is one of the main determinants of organizational success, because it reflects the conditions that support or hinder the implementation of employee duties and responsibilities (Siedler & Idczak-Paceś, 2021). A conducive work environment, characterized by comfort, safety, and emotional support, can motivate employees to work more optimally, thus contributing to increased productivity and achievement of company goals (Vanessa & Nawawi, 2022). Conversely, an unsupportive work environment, as characterized by a monotonous, inflexible, or even toxic work atmosphere, has the potential to lead to job dissatisfaction, psychological distress, and decreased employee performance. These conditions, if not addressed immediately, can increase turnover rates that are detrimental to the organization (Balqist et al., 2023).

In addition, employees are expected to be able to adapt to job demands and complex social dynamics in the work environment, including dealing with differences in characteristics between individuals in the team (Badri, 2020). Social interactions in the workplace can have two potential impacts: first, negative impacts in the form of interpersonal conflicts that can hinder productivity; second, positive impacts in the form of a dynamic work environment due to adaptation to organizational challenges. This dynamic is increasingly complex with external pressures, such as globalization, developments in information technology, and demands for quality improvement (Navarro-Carrillo et al., 2020).

A poor work environment, or toxic workplace, refers to conditions that create psychological discomfort, anxiety, and distress due to dysfunctional interpersonal relationships or work systems (Tunas et al., 2022). Toxic behaviors, both among employees and between supervisors and subordinates, can create destructive dynamics that undermine mental well-being and increase job stress levels, thus having a significant impact on individual and organizational productivity (Pesonen et al., 2021). Job stress, defined as a state of emotional,

cognitive and physical strain resulting from an imbalance between job demands and individual capacities, is often triggered by excessive work pressure and unrealistic targets (Choudhary, 2023; Supit, 2019). The inability to manage this stress can trigger mental disorders, such as anxiety and depression, which directly affect employee performance (Lutfiyah et al., 2020; Tomprou & Hansen, 2018; Vanessa & Nawawi, 2022).

Employee performance is a fundamental indicator that reflects the effectiveness of the organization in achieving its goals. Optimal performance is not only determined by individual abilities and competencies, but also significantly influenced by the quality of a conducive work environment (Ahad et al., 2023). In this context, the influence of the impact of toxic workplace and job stress on employee performance is a critical aspect that must be understood. Unsupportive working conditions can disrupt employees' psychological well-being, lower productivity, and increase the risk of organizational instability. Therefore, companies that are oriented towards productivity and employee welfare need to proactively create a healthy work environment and manage work stress factors properly (Sukmawati & Hermana, 2024).

The phenomenon of toxic workplace and work stress on employee performance has become an increasingly relevant issue in the contact center sector, especially in Central Java and Yogyakarta. Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower (2024) shows that around 42% of workers in contact centers admit to experiencing an unhealthy work atmosphere, characterized by poor communication and lack of support from colleagues. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) report in 2024 also noted that stress levels in the service sector, including contact centers, increased by 35% in the last two years. This condition triggers concerns about the negative impact on employees' mental and physical health, which can lead to decreased productivity and high turnover rates (Sari & Dudija, 2024).

A study conducted by the Association of Indonesian Contact Center Companies (APCCI) in 2024, indicated that employees in a toxic work environment experience lower levels of job satisfaction and an increased risk of mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression. Furthermore, the survey showed that 50% of employees in contact centers feel stressed due to high work targets and emotional pressure from interactions with customers (Alsomaidaee et al., 2023). Various previous studies have identified the significant influence of toxic workplace and work stress on employee performance. Research by Samantha et al. (2023) identified that toxic work environments negatively impact

mental health outcomes. Indicating that employees in such environments may experience increased stress and anxiety, which can lead to poorer overall well-being. Research by Hinder (2022) suggested that in his study found workplace bullying had a significant negative effect on employee well-being. Employees reported feeling less confident and more stressed due to bullying behavior, which reduced their job satisfaction and overall mental health.

Research by Alsomaidaee et al., (2023) shows that this paper identifies a gap in existing research regarding the interaction between toxic work environments, mental health, and leadership styles. It aims to fill this gap by empirically investigating how paternalistic leadership can influence the relationship between toxic workplaces and employee well-being. Research by Balqist et al. (2023) confirms that various factors, including work stress and work environment, have a significant influence on employee performance. These factors play an important role in determining whether employees can work optimally or face obstacles in carrying out their duties. Similar findings were put forward by Made et al. (2019) who stated that poor employee performance can negatively impact a company's reputation while hindering the achievement of its strategic goals. This research highlights the need for effective management of the factors that influence employee performance.

Havermans et al. (2018) explored the specific impact of workload, work environment, and work stress on employee performance at PT Sinarmas Distribusi Nusantara, Semarang. This research highlights the importance of understanding the common challenges organizations face in managing human resources effectively. , research by Schmutz (2024) underlines the role of employee productivity as a key element of organizational success. The study shows that toxic workplace behaviors can significantly lower employee productivity, which in turn impacts overall organizational performance. These findings reinforce the urgency for organizations to create a healthy and supportive work environment as a strategy to improve employee performance and long-term success.

A study found that increased workload correlated with decreased job satisfaction among employees, suggesting that excessive demands can lead to burnout and dissatisfaction Mandjar and Turangan (2023) and Conversely, manageable workload can foster a sense of accomplishment, contributing positively to job satisfaction. Kharisma and Kurniawati (2024) and research by Farhiya et al. (2023), the main objective of this study was to investigate how workload affects job satisfaction, with a particular focus on the mediating role of

job stress and OCB. This objective is framed within the broader context of improving employee well-being and organizational performance.

Research on the influence of toxic workplace and work stress on employee performance has been widely conducted in various industrial sectors. However, studies that specifically discuss this phenomenon in the contact center industry, especially in the Central Java and DIY regions, are still very limited. The contact center industry has unique characteristics, such as high work pressure, strict target demands, and intense interactions with customers that are often emotional. These conditions can exacerbate the effects of a toxic work environment and increase work stress, which ultimately impacts employee productivity and well-being. Therefore, this study offers a new perspective by exploring the relationship between toxic workplace, job stress, and employee performance in the context of the under-researched contact center industry.

Based on the theoretical review and previous research findings, this study formulates several hypotheses as follows; H1: Toxic workplace negatively affects employee performance, a toxic work environment, such as poor communication, interpersonal conflict, and lack of managerial support, can create an uncomfortable work atmosphere and reduce employee motivation. This condition risks causing a decrease in productivity and increasing turnover rates. H2: Job stress negatively affects employee performance, excessive workload, deadline pressure, and lack of control over work can increase employee stress levels. If not managed properly, this stress can reduce concentration, hinder decision-making, and trigger physical and mental fatigue which results in decreased employee performance.

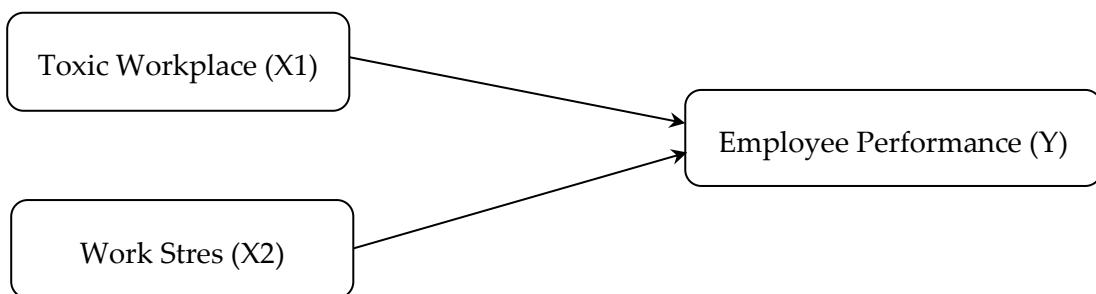
Through testing this hypothesis, this research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between toxic workplace, job stress, and employee performance in the contact center industry. The results of this study are also expected to contribute to companies in designing healthier work policies and improving overall employee well-being.

Methods

In this study, there are three main variables to be analyzed, namely toxic workplace (negative work environment), work stress, and employee performance. Toxic workplace refers to a poor work atmosphere, where negative behaviors such as bullying, discrimination, lack of clear communication, and unfairness in the workplace are the most common. Treatment can affect employee well-being. Meanwhile, work stress refers to the pressure employees

feel due to excessive workload, lack of support, or uncertainty at work. Finally, employee performance is the result achieved by employees in completing tasks and achieving goals set by the organization, which includes productivity, quality of work, initiative, teamwork, and competence. This performance is the dependent variable that is influenced by two independent variables, namely toxic workplace and work stress. following is the model design of this study:

Figure 1
Research Model



This study uses a convenience sampling technique with the criteria for respondents in the form of Contact Center employees in Central Java and Yogyakarta who are over 20 years old. After random sample selection using simple random sampling, 150 respondents participated in this study. The data analysis technique used is multiple linear regression to test the relationship between toxic workplace variables and work stress on employee performance. Hypothesis testing was carried out using Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP) software version 0.17, to ensure accurate results and in accordance with the research objectives.

The instruments used in this study were adapted from measuring instruments that have been developed in previous studies with modifications according to the context of the contact center industry. The toxic workplace measuring instrument refers to the scale developed by Hoel and Cooper (2001), which includes indicators such as conflict between coworkers, poor communication, injustice in the workplace, and lack of managerial support. The work stress measurement tool refers to the Job Demand-Control-Support model of Pelfrene et al. (2001), which consists of indicators of excessive workload, deadline pressure, lack of control over work, and low social support. Meanwhile, the employee performance measurement tool is based on a model developed by Campbell et al. (1990) which assesses work productivity, work quality, attendance and absenteeism, and initiative at work. All indicators are measured

using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

To ensure the accuracy and consistency of the measuring instruments, validity and reliability tests were conducted before the main research was conducted. The validity test was conducted using construct validity through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to ensure that each indicator in the scale truly represents the construct being measured. Items with factor loading below 0.50 were eliminated to ensure the accuracy of the measuring instrument. Meanwhile, the reliability test was conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha method to measure the internal consistency of each variable. The test results show that all variables have an Alpha Cronbach value above 0.70, which means that the measuring instrument has good reliability and can be used in this study. In detail, the Cronbach's Alpha value for toxic workplace is 0.84, for work stress is 0.88, and for employee performance is 0.81, which indicates that all scales have a high level of reliability. Data collection was conducted during the period October 5, 2024 to December 6, 2024 online. The questionnaire was distributed through Google Form to reach respondents more widely and efficiently. By using this approach, the research can obtain more representative data from the population of contact center employees in the Central Java and DIY regions.

Table 1

Operational Definitions and Indicators

Variable	Indicator
Toxic Workplace	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Conflict between coworkers2. Poor communication3. Workplace injustice4. Lack of managerial support. <p>Hoel & Cooper, (2001)</p>
Work Stress	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Workload that is too heavy2. Deadline Pressure3. Lack of Control over Work4. Low Social Support <p>Pelfrene et al., (2001)</p>
Employee Performance	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Work Productivity2. Quality of Work3. Attendance and Absenteeism4. Initiative and Self-Improvement <p>Campbell, J. P. (1990)</p>

Result

Normality Test

Normality testing was conducted using both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk methods to evaluate whether the data met the assumptions of a normal distribution, which is a prerequisite for multiple linear regression analysis. The results, as presented in Table 2, indicate that all variables—toxic workplace, work stress, and employee performance—have p-values above the threshold of 0.05 in both tests.

Tabel 2

Normality Test

Variabel	Kolmogorov-Smirnov (p)	Shapiro-Wilk (p)
Toxic Workplace	0,078	0,065
Work Stress	0,092	0,081
Kinerja Karyawan	0,086	0,073

These findings confirm that the data are normally distributed. Consequently, the regression estimates are likely to be unbiased and valid, allowing for reliable interpretation of subsequent statistical tests (e.g., t and F tests). The residuals' normality also suggests that the model's error terms are symmetrically distributed, reinforcing the appropriateness of using linear regression.

Multicollinearity Test

Multicollinearity test is conducted by looking at the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance to ensure there is no high correlation between independent variables. The results are presented in Table 3.

Tabel 3

Multicollinearity Test

Variabel	Tolerance	VIF
Toxic Workplace	0,204	4,91
Work Stress	0,204	4,91

A Tolerance value greater than 0.1 and a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) less than 10 indicate that there is no multicollinearity between the independent variables in the regression model. Low multicollinearity means that the toxic workplace and work stress variables do not have too strong a relationship with each other, allowing each variable to make a unique contribution to variations in

employee performance. Thus, the estimated regression coefficients remain stable, there is no distortion in the interpretation of the relationship between variables, and the regression results can be validly used for further analysis and decision making.

Multiple Linear Regression Test

To assess the effect of toxic workplace and work stress on employee performance, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results

Variabel Independen	Koefisien Regresi (B)	t-statistik	p-value
Toxic Workplace	-0,114	-1,114	0,267
Work Stress	-0,248	-2,478	0,014
Konstanta	3,829	8,721	0,000

Notes: $p < 0.05$ significant at 5% level; $p < 0.01$ significant at 1% level

The regression analysis indicates that **toxic workplace** has a negative but statistically **insignificant** effect on employee performance ($p = 0.267 > 0.05$). While a toxic environment may affect employee morale and motivation, its direct impact on performance appears limited in this model. In contrast, **work stress** exhibits a significant negative effect on performance ($p = 0.014 < 0.05$), suggesting that employees who experience higher stress levels tend to have lower productivity and effectiveness. These results are consistent with previous research highlighting the detrimental impact of chronic stress on concentration, cognitive function, and work outcomes.

F Test and Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The ANOVA test (F test) is used to assess the significance of the model as a whole, as well as to see the coefficient of determination (R^2).

Table 5

F and R^2 Test

Statistik	Nilai	p-value
F-statistik	30,233	0,000
R^2 (Adjusted)	0,463	-

The test result of F-statistic = 30.233 with p-value = 0.000 shows that the overall regression model is significant, which means that the independent variables toxic workplace and work stress together have an influence on employee performance. In addition, the value of Adjusted R² = 0.463 indicates that these two variables are able to explain 46.3% of the variation in employee performance, while the remaining 53.7% is influenced by other factors not included in the model, such as leadership, organizational culture, compensation, and work-life balance. Although the model has a fairly good prediction rate, the existence of other factors that contribute to employee performance indicates the need for further research to identify additional variables that can strengthen this model.

Discussion

This study investigates the impact of a toxic workplace and work stress on employee performance within contact center companies located in the Central Java and Yogyakarta (DIY) regions. The findings indicate that both toxic workplace conditions and work-related stress negatively affect employee performance. In particular, employees who work in toxic environments and experience high levels of stress tend to show a decline in their performance. However, some individuals who are capable of managing stress effectively and adapting to adverse work conditions are still able to maintain their performance quality. These results highlight the importance of cultivating a healthy work environment and providing adequate support systems to enable employees to work optimally, reduce stress, and mitigate the detrimental effects of toxic workplace dynamics.

The study demonstrates that a toxic workplace exerts a negative influence on employee performance. Unfavorable work conditions—such as negative interpersonal behavior, role ambiguity, and lack of managerial support—contribute to decreased productivity. Although the t-statistic value of 1.114 and p-value of 0.267 suggest that the effect is not statistically significant, the trend indicates a potential impact worth addressing.

These findings support previous research suggesting that a negative work environment can diminish motivation, lower job satisfaction, and increase absenteeism (Made et al., 2019). Moreover, in an organizational context, toxic work culture and unhealthy competition may cause employees to feel undervalued, thereby impairing both the quality and quantity of their output (Schmutz, 2024). Therefore, organizations must strive to create a healthy,

supportive, and inclusive work environment to enhance employee performance and reduce toxic workplace effects.

Furthermore, this study also found that work stress has a significant negative effect on employee performance. Stress resulting from excessive workloads, unclear job roles, or time pressure can lead to anxiety and tension, ultimately diminishing work quality. The t-statistic value of 2.478 and p-value of 0.014 confirm that the effect, while moderate, is statistically significant.

This finding aligns with earlier studies which reported that prolonged work stress can reduce focus, impair creativity, and lower overall productivity (Pratama, 2019). In addition, Natasya (2019), as cited in Fahmi (2017), emphasized that long-term stress may lead to physical and psychological health problems, such as fatigue, sleep disturbances, and more serious mental health disorders. Consequently, it is essential for organizations to address the sources of work stress and provide appropriate support through wellbeing programs, stress management training, and promoting a healthier work-life balance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings that have been previously described and discussed, several conclusions can be drawn. First, a toxic workplace environment has a negative but statistically insignificant effect on employee performance at the Central Java DIY Contact Center. Although a poor and stressful work atmosphere can reduce comfort and morale, its impact is not strong enough to significantly alter employee performance. Second, general work stress exerts a significant negative influence on employee performance within the organization. This indicates that, despite the varied sources of stress, its consequences on performance are more substantial and measurable compared to those arising solely from a toxic workplace.

To improve employee performance, organizations can undertake several strategic interventions aimed at managing both toxic work environments and work-related stress. Primarily, it is essential to foster a healthy work environment by minimizing the elements that contribute to toxicity. This includes enhancing open communication, providing adequate social support, and clearly defining employee roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, conflict management training and the cultivation of a supportive organizational culture are pivotal in building a conducive workplace atmosphere.

Equally important is the implementation of effective stress management strategies. Companies should offer structured programs such as stress

management workshops, coping skills training, and access to facilities that support employee well-being—such as flexible working hours, psychological counseling services, and recreational spaces.

Finally, active managerial support plays a vital role. Managers must be proactive in offering both motivational and practical assistance, including recognition and mentorship, to help employees navigate job-related challenges. Regular monitoring of employees' psychological well-being is also critical to maintaining a positive organizational climate and mitigating excessive stress.

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